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Refreshing Prensky, mapping individuals digital usage

Student Dissertation

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THU: Refreshing Prensky, mapping individuals digital usage (Richard Lamb)

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[Dr Simon Ball](#)

8 February 2014

In this fast moving and ever changing digital landscape it is no surprise that work published in 2001, now seems out of date and in need of refreshing.

Prensky's "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants" paper published in 2001, has provided a useful framework and initiated a useful and timely discourse into the nature of education and how to adapt learning practices for a new generation of computer literate students.

However, Bennett et al. (2008) suggests that "Young people's relationships with technology is much more complex than the digital native characterisation suggests."

Whilst for Tedd (2012) "Digital natives are not nearly as digital as we think they are in the stereotype – they prefer to communicate face to face."

Bennett et al. (2008) argue that;

- The digital natives debate is akin to a 'moral panic'
- There is no evidence of a distinct new digital native learning style

It seems that students and employees are motivated, intrinsically or extrinsically to complete their work and therefore seem motivated to adopt any necessary technologies in order to complete it. (Elias, Smith, & Barney, 2012)

The artifact created explores a new typology of Visitors and Residents, which helps us, understand how individuals in education and the workplace use the technology at their disposal. This is based upon White & Cornu (2011) who propose a continuum of Visitors & Residents as a replacement for Prensky's Digital Natives and Immigrants.

The continuum allows people to map the different ways in which they behave when using their chosen online technology, without categorising them by age; only their style of use is assessed.

These usage maps can then be compared and analysed to better understand types of Internet and social media usage and user attitudes towards the chosen technologies. This could have implications for effective learning and productive employees as more people are educated and work from home.

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As part of the presentation of this artifact we will demonstrate how to map an individuals Internet use using the continuum and categorise the map created.

To participate in the mapping element of the presentation, participants should prepare:

- A list of the websites and apps they use regularly
- A continuum (this could simply be a sheet of A4 paper divided into quarters). Label the horizontal axis Visitor – Resident. Label the vertical axis Personal - Professional

Extra content

<http://tallblog.conted.ox.ac.uk/index.php/2013/10/11/mapping-online-engagement/>

The Visitor and Residents mapping blog, contains a short article and a video showing how to complete a Visitor / Resident Mapping exercise. Although written and presented by one of the researcher into Visitor and Residents mapping, the material takes an academic approach, highlighting its research base, demonstrating its ease of use and suggesting why it is useful.

<http://marcprensky.com/> - Marc Pensky introduced the concept of Digital Natives and migrants. The paper and other associated resources are on this website.

Twitter feed @daveowhite, one of the lead authors of the Digital Visitors and Residents research. Also the Technology Assisted Life Long Learning blogat oxford University, where Dave White posts.

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects/visitorsandresidents.aspx> - this website contains current research into a new typology that could progress the digital natives narrative and be the basis of my conference presentation.



[Richard Lamb](#)

09:34 on 13 February 2014

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[Jonathan Vernon](#)

5:22pm 9 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Prensky has been discredited. There never was such a thing as a 'digital native'. I struggle to understand how he was ever published as by all accounts he just made it up to get attention and sell books.

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'Claims are put forward with limited empirical evidence' (e.g. [Tapscott](#), 1998) or 'supported by anecdotes and appeals to common-sense beliefs' (e.g. Prensky, 2001), who also cites Captain James T Kirk from [Star Trek](#) (sic) ... as if a fictional character, or the show (rather than its author) should be the one to site at all.

These is one of the best 'debunkers':

Bennett, S, Maton, K, & Kervin, L 2008, 'The 'digital natives' debate: A critical review of the evidence', *British Journal Of Educational Technology*, 39, 5, pp. 775-786, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 9 February 2014.

Tapscott, D (1998) *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* McGraw-Hill Companies.

Jones C., Ramanaua R., Cross S. & Healing G. (2010) Net generation or Digital Natives: is there a distinct new generation entering university? *Computers and Education* 54, 722–732.



[Chris Pegler](#)

9:05am 10 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Jomathan, I think that you might be stealing Richard's best lines here?

Personally I feel that we do owe something to Prensky for his contribution to current understanding. He was very influential at the time (as the abstract notes it was 'timely' :-)) and at the time I was in conferences where he challenged educationists in their narrow view of online learning and the role of students in tihs). In the abstract the reference to Residents and Visitors as an alternative framework gives a flavour of where this presentation is likely to take us. Clue here: <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/3171/3049> to give you an intro into this post-Prensky alternative to digital natives.

Its sounding like a presentation in which the black/white on/off idea of Prensky is replaced by shades of grey (no pun intended). Its been a little while since I refeshed my view of White's idea of residents and visitors and look forward to this exploration. Thanks (Jonathan) for the links to the debunkers. I am not sure that I consider Prensky debunked myself. Questioned yes, and its the role of educational researchers to question. I have my own questions about visitors nad residents ...



[Anne Bradbury](#)

10:37am 10 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Jonathan,

Richard is already aware of the reaction against Prensky's views - we have discussed it and he already has literature about this.

I think the intention of the presentation may be to refer to Prensky - and look at whether another, more recent, typology is more useful.

Watch this space!

Anne



[Jo Jacob](#)

8:13pm 10 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hello Richard, it was great to see a sneak preview of your slides at the weekend. The images were clear and informative, so now I am looking forward to hearing the accompanying talk.



[Debbie Grieve](#)

11:44am 11 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Richard,

I am intrigued. Have to say this is the first challenge/debate in relation to Presky's thinking I have seen so I am fascinated to learn more. Such a hot topic. Mapping usage also seems fascinating so hope you have time to do that during the ppt.

Best wishes!

Deb



[Avril sweeney](#)

10:18pm 11 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Richard, I read your abstract. I have added your presentation as a favourite. I'm interested in understanding about visitors and residents and how individuals in education and the workplace use technology. Avril



[Nicola Morris](#)

10:19pm 11 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Richard, I first heard of the residents v visitors typology a few weeks ago and am looking forward to hearing more about it. Is the choice that simple or are there shades of both? Can a person move from one to the other? If I take myself personally I am an immigrant but depending on what I am doing can see myself as both a visitor and sometimes a resident, sometimes on extended holiday. Look forward to seeing a new take on this



[Nicola Morris](#)

10:19pm 11 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Richard, I first heard of the residents v visitors typology a few weeks ago and am looking forward to hearing more about it. Is the choice that simple or are there shades of both? Can a person move from one to the other? If I take myself personally I am an immigrant but depending on what I am doing can see myself as both a visitor and sometimes a resident, sometimes on extended holiday. Look forward to seeing a new take on this.

Good luck Nicola



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

8:28am 12 February 2014 (Edited 8:40am 12 February 2014) [Permalink](#)

The 'visitor' vs. 'resident' differentiation rings true and is based on sound research. Prensky's original ideas of the 'digital native' have no foundation at all either in his own research (he did none) or even on an academic literature research. I look forward to returning to the volume of papers, notes and discussions on this and will have to disagree with some of the statements above - yes, a useful debate, so the 'digital native' has us talking, but if you read most of Prensky's output as I have now done you will either be horrified or laugh or cry at the absurd statements that he makes and the truly ridiculous attempts at 'cod' academic writing where references are, to put it bluntly, complete buncum. He will quote, as if it counts, the very words used by Spock in an episode of Star Trek ... and give this as a footnote and reference as if watching the episode yourself will in anyway qualify his argument, or he will quote someone and say, 'Mr Smith from England writing to The Times' as if this is a recognised and accepted way to reference - there is rarely any opportunity to check the references he offers - I've tried often and repeatedly fail. He gained an MA from Harvard, he states, but rarely reaches the most basic academic standards in much of his writing. Take a close look at 'Teaching Digital Natives' - it is counterproductive and will go against anything teachers have been taught. He is rightfully accused of hyperbole and scaremongering. Because he is controversial it does spark debate. There have been too many 'catchy phrases' regarding eLearning. There are now many research papers, by senior, experienced academics and their teams, as you have found, who repeat their research with students every few years. There has never been a 'digital native' - they are as illusive as the yeti. Invaluable to try and define different user types when it comes to technology, but it is as complex as any grouping, tagging or labelling of people can be. Best wishes. I will follow with interest and try qualify my responses, most of which I have in blog posts with the appropriate references to back it up.



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

8:31am 12 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Apologies for typos - working one handed on the iPad and struggling with my third pair of reading glasses in as many months.



[Cara Saul](#)

4:01pm 12 February 2014 (Edited 4:03pm 12 February 2014) [Permalink](#)

Chris

I found MAODE H800 and H817 both allowed us to explore the validity of a range of very popular theory - that has since been debunked. But I think that there is value in having these provocative 'tall poppies' to attract discussion and debate. The trouble is that with many so called 'truisms' 'urban myths', call them what you will, that there is an element of truth that catches the public imagination. Children and young people are engaged and involved with technology, so it is tempting to describe them, in their ease and enthusiasm, as 'digital natives'. But proficiency in using tools alone does not allow learners to explore and develop - teachers, coaches and more experienced users provide this framework

suggesting where to go and what to do, or commenting on self-directed journeys.

I quite like the phrase 'digital explorers' - of course some explorers get the bus to Clapham and others take a canoe to the Amazon. And it depends what you do when you get there.



[Sian Lovegrove](#)

12:36pm 13 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Richard

your presentation was the only one which ended up being visible to me so congratulations for keeping it simple for those of us who have accessibility issues! I suppose I was wondering "so what?". Why would someone want to categorise how online we are and what would we do with the information?

Sian



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

6:32pm 13 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Following the live presentations, we asked each speaker to respond to questions posed by audience members. In the short time available, it was not possible to put all of the questions submitted to the speaker for a response. We asked all speakers if they would respond to the unanswered questions here on Cloudworks. Here are all of the questions asked during the session:

- ▶ I first heard of the residents v visitors typology a few weeks ago. Is the choice that simple or are there shades of both? Can a person move from one to the other?
- ▶ How do you see this typology being used, Richard?
- ▶ I think its important that you have differentiated between personal and professional interaction. Professional interaction has helped me a great deal to connect as, like yourself, I work remotely.
- ▶ Are there any intermediate steps suggested? Visitor - resident seems widely different positions.
- ▶ Are there statistics like those Jakob Nielsen comes up with splitting web users 1%, 9%, 90% in terms of degrees of 'being resident' as it were?
- ▶ How do you see this typology being used, Richard?



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

4:37am 15 February 2014 (Edited 4:41am 15 February 2014) [Permalink](#)

I believe that these are vital discussions - that meaningful definitions of responses to digital technologies are necessary, however the labelling of groups of people, as Prensky did and the way the press picked it up and the academic community initially took his ideas to be sound is worth dwelling on to. Prensky gets too much airplay in OU Modules - he needs to be removed. He lacks credibility. Proper scrutiny of his ideas would have left them unpublished. It's a couple of years since I researched the topic so once this conference is

over I will gladly see where we stand. Some of the academic papers on the topic are in a blog post of December 2012. <http://mymindbursts.com/2012/12/13/prensky-2/>



[Daniel Clark](#)

9:35am 15 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

I was so intrigued by the talk that I did my own mapping and [wrote a short blog post about it](#).

Would be interested to see anyone else's maps, if they are happy to share?



[Avril sweeney](#)

10:50am 15 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

I like the mapping exercise, I think the continuum/mapping exercise could be carried forward or implemented in my organisation. It is simple, easy to follow and the mapping framework could be used at the beginning of meetings or projects to guide team members in terms of being residents or visitors . Avril.



[Richard Lamb](#)

12:14pm 15 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Thanks for all your questions, responses and discussions on this topic. I just wanted to respond to the questions that came up during the H818 conference that we didn't have time to answer.

I first heard of the residents v visitors typology a few weeks ago. Is the choice that simple or are there shades of both? Can a person move from one to the other?

Definitely shades of both. I think you can move from being more visitor to more resident, it's a continuum after all, so you should be able to move along it. There may also be circumstances where people have moved from resident to visitor, if they have had a bad experience online eg privacy issues, cyber bullying etc.

How do you see this typology being used, Richard?

I found the TALL blog, through the preliminary research for H818. I had read the Prensky paper and had found it somewhat unsatisfactory in explaining my situation. I really liked the way it was presented and explained so clearly. Doing the mapping exercise was immensely helpful in understanding my own situation.

I think it's important that you have differentiated between personal and professional interaction. Professional interaction has helped me a great deal to connect as, like yourself, I work remotely.

Are there any intermediate steps suggested? Visitor - resident seems widely

different positions.

When mapping your online presence you should view the concepts of Visitor and Residents as a continuum, therefore you can have as many intermediate steps as required.

Are there statistics like those Jakob Nielsen comes up with splitting web users 1%, 9%, 90% in terms of degrees of 'being resident' as it were?

The research is in its early stages, so the authors haven't got any statistics like that yet. Would be interesting to explore age, gender, social demographic and other factors in online usage to see if there are any trends.

How do you see this typology being used, Richard?

I think it would have been really good to use this as one of the first exercises in H818. It would have helped explain one of the reasons I have struggled with the module, and provided the course tutors with some useful information about how likely people were to engage with the topic. At the beginning I had never really done much online collaboration and to be honest, I still find it very uncomfortable and I engage reluctantly.

In a work setting I think it helps categorise those best able to cope with remote working and would indicate those that might need some support. I would like to run the mapping exercise with my colleagues.



[Cara Saul](#)

11:36am 25 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Richard I really liked the idea of incorporating the resident and visitor typology in the early part of H818. It would have been very useful to students and tutors. The mapping exercise is also very illuminating. I am hoping to incorporate both into my website, to help learners assess their digital engagement. However I do find myself getting quite frustrated that many studies just quantify the technology used and not the exact detail of how it is used. The process, order, connections, numbers of iterations, How learners are blending new technology with conventional approaches. What is open/closed. Also what people are really doing and what they say they do. Suppose I what a process map to go with your technology map. Wondering if sharing this sort of information might help inclusion?

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